

# Narratives

## Executive Summary

The Dawson/Wibaux Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) serves the communities of Richey, Wibaux and Glendive in frontier Eastern Montana. RSVP has been an active 42 year old program and since 1982 is sponsored by the Dawson County Commissioners. Application for this grant is made through Dawson County as the legal applicant for the RSVP program.

The mission statement of the RSVP is to provide a variety of opportunities for people 55 or older to participate more fully in the life of their community through significant volunteer service.

An estimated 240 RSVP volunteers will serve. Some of their activities will include: delivering commodities, providing transportation and companionship to at-risk seniors, assisting community programs with meeting their needs as designed in other focus areas.

The primary focus area of this project is Healthy Futures. At the end of the three year grant, the anticipated outcome is that at least 80 (60% of the 133) at-risk seniors served by RSVP volunteers under the performance measures will retain their current level of independence. The CNCS federal investment of \$30,192.00 will be supplemented by \$38,962.00 of non-federal resources.

## Strengthening Communities

The Dawson/Wibaux Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) has served the communities of Richey, Wibaux and Glendive in frontier Eastern Montana for 42 years. Dawson County has maintained sponsorship of the program since 1982.

The project service area encompasses 2,373 square miles and has a population of 9,445. According to Census Bureau statistics for Dawson County, 95% of the population is Caucasian and 16.8% (1587) of the population is 65 years of age or older. The median household income is \$49,894.00 while 14.4% of the population of all ages is considered to be at or below the federal poverty level.

The project service area is within 100 miles of the Bakken Oil Formation and our communities are feeling a direct impact from this industry. While not much drilling has occurred in Dawson County, the influx of workers seeking housing in our area has increased, thus increasing the price of homes and rentals. Seeking and maintaining "affordable" housing is a real challenge for our community

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members, especially seniors living on a fixed income.

Identifying the primary focus area and community needs while integrating senior service activities with other service programs in the area were done by collaborating with local agencies and organizations currently working with volunteers as well as those who may have interest by virtue of their mission and purpose. Among the diverse groups and organizations are: Area I Agency on Aging, Dawson County Council on Aging, Dawson County Health Department, Dawson Urban Transportation, Chamber of Commerce, Action for Eastern Montana (Human Resource Development Council) and Senior Centers in the three communities. Healthy Futures is the primary focus area of this project and the community need was determined after reviewing the statistics from the annual Area Agency on Aging report for 2013.

The service activities of providing transportation, companionship and delivery of food to at-risk seniors will contribute to 80 (60% of 133) seniors being able to live independently with a quality of life to be determined by themselves.

Partnerships with the above groups are based on interest in meeting community needs, promoting senior issues and volunteerism. These partnerships have led to opportunities to network with community leaders and professionals who bring their skills and expertise to the shared goals of serving the needs of the community.

Senior Corp program directors from 3 Eastern Montana programs meet several times during the grant cycle to plan activities and special projects such as MLK day activities as well as collaborate on National Day of Service projects.

Program staff and advisory council are responsible for public awareness of the program. Information on orientations, trainings, activities and volunteer opportunities are made available through newsletters, bulletin boards and newspaper articles. RSVP will be represented and have program information at the local Health Fair, the local county fair and any other appropriate location. Articles promoting RSVP will be submitted to the local community newspaper as well as a regional newspaper "Best Times".

Program staff attempts to ensure inclusion by partnering with agencies that serve low-income

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populations.

RSVP mobilizes community resources to impact strategic initiatives and participate in community wide activities designed to address primary focus areas of Healthy Futures, veterans and military families and community-based volunteer programs.

The development of an active and well-organized advisory council will lead to a program that is designed and evaluated based on the public's awareness of the impacts of the program. Council members are professionals and leaders in the community. Because of their professional positions (volunteer coordinator at the Glendive Medical Center, Chamber of Commerce director and local news reporter), they are aware of new and existing community needs and are able to suggest new volunteer opportunities that align the program to current initiatives sponsored by the Corporation. Council members meet nine times during the year and serve three-year terms.

### Recruitment and Development

#### QUALITY EXPERIENCE

Providing a quality volunteer experience begins with an interview process that gathers information on the volunteer as well as his/her expectations of assignment. Tracking involvement and the level of satisfaction as measured through time served helps to assure a quality experience. By updating volunteer files and conducting and reviewing annual assessments, program staff should be able to track a level of satisfaction and gauge continued participation.

In hopes of increasing the recruitment and development of new volunteers, staff will encourage cultural and social diversity in an effort to form community teams geared to address community problems. Volunteers will be offered the opportunity to acquire new skills (i.e. computer or leadership skills) as workshops become available. The annual Governor's Conference on Aging is one avenue that offers educational information to senior volunteers. Opportunities to reflect on the meaning of their service are present every time we gather as an organization, whether it is a recognition event or a training opportunity. Recognizing that volunteers want to perform meaningful activities and encouraging the placement of those volunteers at appropriate worksites will enhance the quality of their volunteer experience.

#### RECRUITING/RETENTION/RECOGNIZING

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Recruitment will continue to be a priority for program director. Program director will maintain the goal of 240 unduplicated volunteers serving in a grant cycle. Efforts will target recent retirees of the baby-boomer generation by incorporating a variety of recruitment methods including personal contact with prospective volunteers, newspaper articles, social networking and using the established state wide website for volunteer programs. Building relationships within the communities we serve results in assignments designed to recruit volunteers from all walks of life.

Program director will make full use of leadership skills by discussing and documenting volunteer's individual preferences, experiences and skills during the interview and orientation process. Having placements commensurate with the volunteer's expressed desires should encourage maximum satisfaction for the volunteers and the stations served. Program director shall maintain an open-door policy encouraging volunteers to interact with the director in order to share problems, issues and concerns. Director will assess new volunteers upon completion of a two-month period to reaffirm commitment to RSVP and to provide an informal evaluation.

Program staff, board and workstation supervisors will recognize volunteers at least once a year for their service, accomplishments and contributions. Informal recognition is ongoing through thank you, birthday cards, listening to and acting on recommendations of volunteers and workstations.

### **TRAINING/TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE**

Project staff and volunteers are encouraged to take advantage of all training/technical assistance opportunities available through the program, sponsor or in the community. Opportunities that are currently available to volunteers include attending the Governor's Conference on Aging or participating in "Leadership Glendive" which is a personal development program for individuals with interest and potential for expanding leadership engagement at work and in the community. Both opportunities are encouraged and supported by scholarships. The sponsoring agency will encourage director and staff to take advantage of any available intra-agency workshops and in-service training.

### **Program Management**

#### **DEVELOP AND MANAGE VOLUNTEER STATIONS/ASSIGNMENTS**

Program director will collaborate with local agencies and organizations in order to address the primary focus area of "healthy futures." The community needs detailed in this document will be met by maintaining current sites, developing new sites and continuing to place volunteers in such a way as to most effectively demonstrate high priority needs.

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### **ASSESSMENT OF PROJECT PERFORMANCE**

Project performances and quality assessments will be documented. Annual assessments of project accomplishments, volunteer satisfaction and community input on the results of meeting community needs will be done as follows: participation in a community stakeholders survey, survey of station supervisors during site visit, compare beginning and end of year data for seniors, track number of volunteers providing transportation and companionship to at-risk seniors attending congregate meals and receiving home delivered meals, volunteer stations, station supervisors and project director shall coordinate their efforts to gather the necessary data and maintain all volunteer and station records.

### **MANAGING INFORMATION AND DATA**

RSVP utilizes Volunteer Reporter software to manage volunteer files and data. RSVP assures that memorandums of understanding are properly maintained and updated accordingly. Program director has contact with stations supervisors on a regular basis when time sheets are collected. Volunteer timesheets with signature of supervisor will be on file and maintained by RSVP. Project performances and quality assessments will be documented.

### **MANAGING AND SECURING PROJECT RESOURCES**

The RSVP program is sponsored by Dawson County and thus follows all of its policies and procedures to ensure accountability. A claim process is used for monthly expenditures and payroll. Project staff is responsible for managing in-kind resources. Each year the program participates in an independent financial audit conducted at the county level. Establishing an "excess funds" line item within the budget allows RSVP staff and advisory council members and volunteers to continually look for new and creative ways to generate local support and resources while complying with federal regulations. The director's position will be divided between management of program and time directed towards meeting fundraising goals. As part of the director's time being charged to excess funds line item, director is responsible for securing and developing additional cash and in-kind support in order to sustain and expand the project, especially through linkages with business and philanthropic organizations. Program director and advisory board will need to secure \$6,000.00 in cash as part of the non-federal budget match by March 31, 2016 and apply for county funds annually as needed to meet non-federal match in accordance with the county budgeting process.

### **Organizational Capability**

Dawson County has sponsored the Dawson Wibaux Retired and Senior Volunteer Program for the

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past 33 years. Dawson County is responsible for the administration and financing of health, welfare, justice, transportation and community development programs. The Dawson County administration seeks local solutions to local problems and works to improve the health and well being of the residents of Dawson County.

To assist with the mission of Dawson County, the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program is directed by two primary goals: collaboration with existing agencies and meeting critical community needs. Existing agencies, such as the Area Agency on Aging and the Dawson County Health Department are aware of the potential that RSVP volunteers have in contributing to and identifying and working to solve community needs. Directors of all three programs participate with the local Council on Aging in setting goals and maintaining existing services to seniors in the area.

Dawson County relies on the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program to identify and engage volunteers who want to serve their communities through meaningful volunteer activities.

On an organizational level, RSVP benefits through its partnership with Dawson County. The sponsor provides program management and support on a variety of levels, as well as physical space and the opportunity of a convenient location within the Senior Center. Dawson County provides an array of administrative, fiscal and personnel services that include: supervision of program director, personnel file management, interviewing, hiring as needed and staff evaluation. Central administrative services such as bookkeeping, fiscal accountability, fiscal systems management, payroll management, timesheet maintenance, and general ledger functions are essential to the fiscal management of the program. Dawson County also provides grant management functions such as official correspondence and file maintenance for contractual grants.

The Retired and Senior Volunteer Program has 42 years of experience in managing senior volunteers in Dawson and Wibaux counties. The program has a history of building partnerships in the communities it serves. Working with agencies such as the Dawson County Health Department, Action for Eastern Montana and Glendive Medical Center has led to opportunities to network with community leaders and professionals who bring skills and expertise to the shared goals of serving the needs of the community.

Several of the program workstations were established years ago, but recruitment of volunteers

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continue based on the nature of the work (i.e. thrift store). While reporting on how the program has meet community needs, it is easier for prospective volunteers to see the role of where they can make a difference in our community.

The membership of the advisory council provides much diversity within itself. A newspaper reporter, volunteer coordinator as well as other community leaders provide an extensive amount of knowledge and expertise to the council. The Program director has been with the project for the past 24 years, first serving as administrative assistant and then for sixteen years as program director. She maintains the principal responsibility for the management of the project. The administrative assistant position is part time and maintains the volunteer data for the program. Both positions are subject to county policies and procedures and evaluated on an annual basis.

### Other

NA

### PNS Amendment (if applicable)

NA